

*Includes initiative to reduce barriers for training nurses*

Washington, D.C. - The U.S. House has approved a House-Senate conference report on college affordability legislation that includes provisions authored by Rep. Peter Welch (VT-AL) to address college affordability and expand training opportunities for nurses. President Bush is expected to sign the bill into law.

On the initiative of Welch, [H.R. 4137](#), The Higher Education Opportunity Act, directs the General Accountability Office (GAO) to examine the uses of college and university endowments and whether they are fulfilling their tax exempt public purposes. This report will provide Congress with much-needed information about the efforts of colleges and universities to keep costs down for students and their families.

Welch has advocated for legislation that addresses how colleges use their endowments to improve affordability for students.

"College costs must be brought under control. It's time to call the question and better understand how endowments are being used to improve affordability for students," said Welch. "If every increased dollar in financial aid gets burned by an increased dollar in tuition, students, families, and taxpayers will continue to fall behind. It's simply not sustainable."

Welch also amended the bill to require the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to study the barriers that exist training more registered nurses and develop recommendations to remove these barriers.

"Vermont and other rural states will face a critical shortage of nurses if we don't begin expanding training opportunities now," added Welch.

The Higher Education Opportunity Act, builds on the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, which was signed into law in September and represented the largest increase in student aid

since the 1944 GI Bill.